Explore Florida's Dixie County: Town of Suwannee defies the Digital Age

The sun sets over Salt Creek on the Suwannee River in Suwannee River. (Nancy Moreland / Special to the Orlando Sentinel)

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"To get to my house, you drive through 53,000 acres of wildlife refuge and 23 miles off the main highway to where the road ends at the Gulf of Mexico," said Ben West, a resident of Suwannee, Florida.

It's better to follow Ben's directions than to trust GPS. Technology is fickle in this fishing village at the convergence of the famous river, Gulf and Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge. In Suwannee, the closest thing to a Wi-Fi hot spot is the library parking lot.

That's exactly why you should visit this remote destination in Florida's Big Bend. "In many families today, everyone stares at their cell phones instead of speaking to each other. Visiting Suwannee, kids learn about being on the water and where food comes from by fishing, crabbing and oystering. It's a beautiful place – unlike any I've seen and I've traveled quite a bit," said Carol West, Ben's wife and president of Dixie County Chamber of Commerce.

It's certainly unlike any other in Florida. Along the State's least developed coastline, you get a glimpse of Florida's final frontier.

To fully appreciate the experience, rent a boat from Yellow Jacket RV Resort on your way into town or go kayaking with Suwannee Guides and Outfitter. "Many first time visitors have no idea these wide open spaces still exist in Florida. They're glad the state protects these areas," said Guide Kay McCallister. She recommends Lock Creek Loop, a pleasant paddle through the river delta.

While Kay enjoys showing off Suwannee's natural beauty, she acknowledges that most people come here to fish. "Within minutes of leaving the public boat ramp, you're in prime fishing grounds."

As you might expect, there's nary a Hilton in sight, but there are plenty of vacation rentals with direct Gulf access via canals. All are an easy walk or golf cart ride to beautiful sunsets on the Gulf or overlooking the marsh at Salt Creek Shellfish Company Restaurant.

Speaking of coastal cuisine, Suwannee is on the Big Bend Shellfish Trail, a driving tour dedicated to the enjoyment of fresh seafood. Catch your own or stock up at Demory Creek Seafood. Call ahead, 352-213-9878, to see what's available.

If you began your weekend distracted by the demands of the digital age, you'll breathe a bit deeper after a weekend in Suwannee.

You might not even miss your cell phone.

If you go

Dixie County Chamber of Commerce
352-498-1403
visitdixie.com
dixiechamber.org/suwanneeRiver.php

Suwannee Guides & Outfitter
352-542-8331
suwanneeguides.com

Yellow Jacket RV Resort
352-542-8365
yellowjacketrvresort.com